

The 2002 Linkage Excellence in Management & Leadership Series

# **Coaching and Feedback**

Featuring Marshall Goldsmith



Dear Participant:

Welcome to the third program in Linkage's 2002 Excellence in Management and Leadership Series. The seminar series is designed to bring inspiring and influential business thinkers to your organization in a live and interactive manner.

Today's program, Coaching and Feedback, features Marshall Goldsmith, widely recognized as one of the world's foremost authorities in helping leaders achieve positive, measurable change in behavior - for themselves, their people, and their teams. Specifically, the program will focus on:

- Keys to achieving positive, measurable, long-term behavioral change
- Approaches to giving and receiving feedback
- Results of research on how leaders' follow-up behavior impacts perceptions of leadership effectiveness
- An 8-step process for behavioral coaching
- Strategies to help successful people change

Marshall Goldsmith is the author of *The Leadership Investment: How the World's Best Organizations Gain Strategic Advantage Through Leadership Development*, and editor of two books on coaching - *Learning Journeys: Top Management Experts Share Hard-Earned Lessons on Becoming Great Mentors and Leaders* and *Coaching for Leadership: How the World's Greatest Coaches Help Leaders Learn*.

These participant materials have been designed to complement your conversation with Marshall Goldsmith. Use them to record your notes, ideas, questions, and insights. At specified points during the program, you will be asked to submit questions that Mr. Goldsmith will address during the question-and-answer segment (scheduled toward the end of the program).

Learning is an activity that requires more than passively watching a speaker. Simply watching today's program will neither instill leadership knowledge or skills, nor result in an immediate change in your organization's culture and strategic positioning.

Learning requires the active engagement of your mind and spirit - the motivation and drive to reflect, apply, practice, and experiment.

### About Linkage

Linkage, Inc. is a leading provider of leadership and management development training programs, services, and products. More than 30,000 executives and management professionals have attended a Linkage institute, conference, workshop, or corporate education program. Linkage also provides assessment, consulting, and research services to Fortune 500 companies and other leading organizations. Founded in 1988, Linkage is headquartered in Lexington, Massachusetts, with regional offices located in Atlanta, Brussels, London, Minneapolis, and San Francisco. In both 1997 and 1998, Linkage was honored as one of the “Inc. 500 Fastest Growing Private Companies in the United States.”

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**SECTION 1**

**Satellite Program Materials**

**What You Will Learn**

Participation in this program with Marshall Goldsmith will be your opportunity to learn the latest and most effective strategies for coaching, developing yourself, and gaining and using feedback for positive behavioral change to enhance your own success and the success of others.

**Introduction and Basic Premises**

Marshall believes that coaching is one of the greatest challenges for leaders of the future. He will describe the importance of feedback and provide tips on giving and receiving feedback effectively. He will also explain how to create an environment that enables people to achieve positive behavioral change efficiently in a short period of time.

As leaders struggle to maintain effectiveness in the midst of continual change and an increasingly fast pace in today's business environment, they tend to use leadership models that they have observed or studied. Historically, leaders saw themselves as possessing the knowledge they needed. Organizations focused on longevity and doing things in prescribed ways. There was usually one best way to accomplish the tasks of the business. The leader's role in this environment was to tell direct reports what to do and how to do it - the leader had the answers, she/he knew best.

In today's environment, the leader is often not the person with the most advanced technological knowledge, nor can the leader solely have the holistic and diverse perspective needed to lead an organization in a global marketplace.

**Question-and-Answer Session**

- If you are participating only in the live presentation of this program, call in, fax, or e-mail your questions to Marshall Goldsmith using the question sheet on page 33.
- If you are participating in a post-broadcast program, share your questions with your seminar coordinator and your colleagues during the post-broadcast discussion.

### When the Session Has Concluded

- Your feedback is valuable in ensuring the integrity of future programs. We take pride in providing relevant, thought-provoking, and enlightening programs - and we rely on you to help make this happen. Complete your participant evaluation form at: [http://www.linkageinc.com/training/satellites/satellite\\_evals.shtml](http://www.linkageinc.com/training/satellites/satellite_evals.shtml)
- To further reinforce your understanding of today's information, as well as hone other aspects of your leadership skills, complete the recommended Post-Presentation Activities that begin on page 18.

### Pre-Presentation Activities

- Become familiar with Marshall Goldsmith's accomplishments by reading the following biographical sketch:

Marshall was rated by Forbes magazine as "one of five top executive coaches" and has been ranked by the Wall Street Journal as one of the "Top 10" consultants in the field of executive development. Marshall is a managing partner of A4SL - the Alliance for Strategic Leadership - a consulting organization that includes more than 100 top professionals in the field of leadership development. He is also the co-founder of the Financial Times Knowledge Dialogue, a videoconference network that connects executives with the world's greatest thinkers.

Aside from his corporate work, Goldsmith completed substantial volunteer projects for the Urban League, the Institute for East/West Studies and the Girl Scouts. He is an emeritus member of the Board of the Peter Drucker Foundation and a frequent contributor to the Drucker Foundation journal, *Leader to Leader*.

Marshall cites Peter Drucker as an inspiration, "...Peter has said that he just wants to help people achieve their goals...his dedication to improving the social sector and making a difference for humanity has encouraged me to try to help the world in my own way."

He holds a Ph.D. from UCLA and an MBA from Indiana University. He is a partner in Duke Corporate Education's Personal Learning Systems.

- Read books authored or edited by Marshall Goldsmith:

*Leading Authorities on Business: Winning Strategies from the Greatest Minds*, Leading Authorities Press, 2002.

*Coaching for Leadership: How the World's Greatest Coaches Help Leaders Learn*, Jossey-Bass, 2000.

*Learning Journeys: Top Management Experts Share Hard-Earned Lessons on Becoming Great Mentors and Leaders*, Davies-Black Publishing, 2000.

*The Leadership Investment: How the World's Best Organizations Gain Strategic Advantage Through Leadership Development*, AMACOM, 2000.

*The Organization of the Future*, Jossey-Bass, 2000.

- Program Discussion

### **During this Program**

- Participate!
- Submit questions to be addressed by Marshall Goldsmith during the question-and-answer session. Mr. Goldsmith will respond to questions in the latter third of the program. To submit questions, either complete the fax form found on page 33, or call in or send an e-mail when prompted during the program.
- Use the following Participant Materials to follow along with the presentation.

### **Coaching for Behavioral Change**

Marshall discusses the first step in coaching for behavioral change - developing yourself. Developing yourself involves learning to lead the organization of the future - one with new structures of working and less dependence on authority. Leaders need to learn continuously and on the run while developing people and teams quickly at the same time. Developing yourself requires learning what to do as well as learning what to avoid.

### **Encouraging and Using Feedback**

One of the most powerful ways to develop and change your behavior is to encourage feedback. It is important to get this feedback from a variety of sources. Some organizations engage in carefully constructed 360° feedback processes that give leaders candid and anonymous feedback for their growth and development.

The critical factor in making the feedback effective for your personal development is how you deal with and respond to the information you receive. In this portion of the program Marshall will present a model for encouraging feedback and using the information you receive for constructive personal change.



## Encouraging Feedback: Steps in the Process



### Steps of the Feedback Process

- **Ask** - Peter Drucker said that in organizations of the past, the role of the leader was to tell. In organizations today and of the future, the role of the leader is to ask. This is easy to say and difficult to do. It takes courage. Ask your peers and employees, customers and suppliers, "How am I doing?" People need to feel that it is safe to be honest - that there will be no reprisals for their candidness. Choose an appropriate time and place to ask for feedback. Research tells us that people tend not to give candid personal feedback in a group situation.
- **Listen** - Listen to what people are telling you. Attempt to listen without judging what the person is saying. Listen without expressing your opinion or responding. Inquire further to ascertain that you have an accurate view of what the person shared. Consider taking notes - writing down what the person says will help you reflect on the information later on.
- **Think** - Before you respond be aware of your reaction - the thoughts you've begun forming. Most of us want to jump right in with our rationalizations, excuses, perspectives, or ideas. Consider and reflect upon the person's perceptions of your leadership behavior. Work on developing your understanding of how others perceive your behavior and its impact - the intended and the unintended consequences on that person, other employees, and the work environment.
- **Thank** - This is a vitally important and often overlooked step in the feedback process. It's critical to thank people for taking the time and giving their effort to provide you with feedback. Thanking people helps to validate their efforts and demonstrates your seriousness to the process.
- **Respond** - There are three guidelines for responding to feedback:
  - Keep it positive
  - Keep it simple
  - Keep it focused

- **Involve** - Involve a wide circle of colleagues, employees, partners, and customers in this process. The key to involvement is mutual respect.
- **Change** - People can and do change. Choose one or two behaviors to focus on in developing your action plan. Identify concrete, observable actions to do differently. Monitor how well you are doing by keeping track of what you committed to change.
- **Follow-up** - This step is the most critical one. Follow-up demonstrates that you are truly committed to changing your behavior. Marshall suggests that you say to people, "You know that I am working on being a better listener. How am I doing? If you had any suggestions for me, what would they be?"

### The Impact of Feedback and Follow-up on Leadership Effectiveness

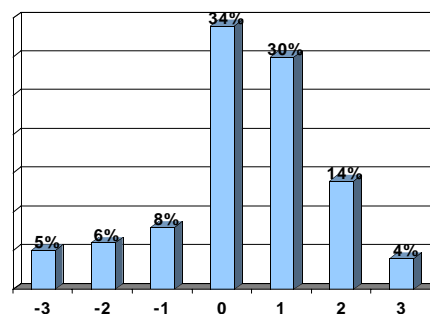
Keilty, Goldsmith & Co. designed a study to look at the impact of follow-up on leadership effectiveness. In this study co-workers of participants were asked:

- Did this person become a more effective leader?
- Did this person initially respond concerning her/his feedback?
- How frequently did this person follow-up concerning her/his progress?

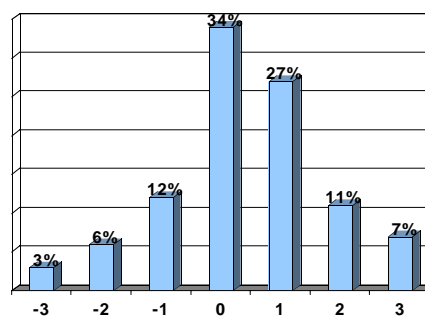
The results follow:

- Leaders who were seen as not responding to feedback and not following-up were perceived as only slightly more effective than they had been 18 months earlier. While 48% were rated as more effective, more than half were rated as unchanged or less effective. This statistic is similar to what you would see by random chance - "the attendance award."

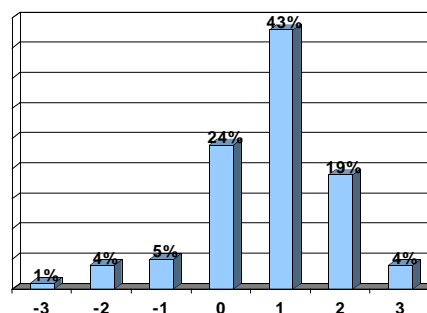
**Table 1: Did Not Respond, and Did No Follow-Up**



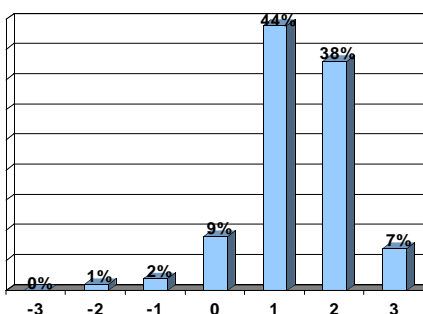
- Leaders who were seen as responding but doing no follow-up were perceived as no more effective than managers who did not respond at all. In fact, this group had the highest percentage of leaders who were perceived as getting worse. Raising expectations without producing results engenders dissatisfaction and decreased respect.

**Table 2: Responded, But Did No Follow-Up**

- Even a little follow-up has a positive impact. Approximately two-thirds of the leaders in this group were viewed as more effective. One third were rated as unchanged or less effective.

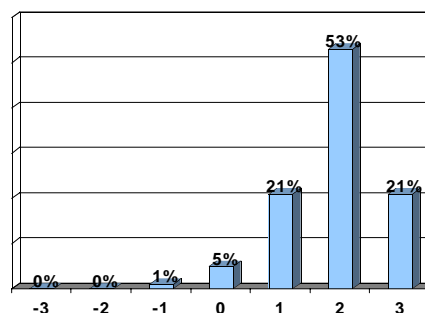
**Table 3: Responded, and Did Little Follow-Up**

- Leaders who did some follow-up experienced another positive shift in scores with 89% rated as more effective. Almost half of the leaders in this group were rated in the highest two categories and almost none were seen as less effective.

**Table 4: Responded, and Did Some Follow-Up**

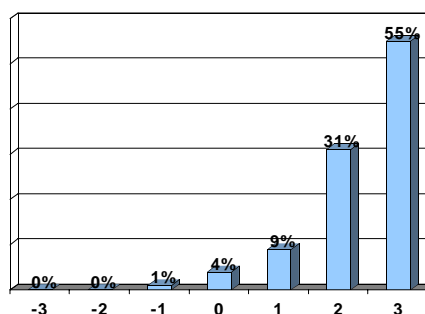
- Leaders who engaged in frequent follow-up were almost invariably perceived as more effective. This group showed a major increase in the positive categories, as well as three times more leaders in the highest category.

**Table 5: Responded, and Did Request Follow-Up**



- This table shows the dramatic positive impact of consistent or periodic follow-up. More than half of the leaders are rated in the highest possible category while 86% are rated either +2 or +3.

**Table 6: Responded, and Did Consistent/Periodic Follow-Up**



**Follow-up works!** Many leadership development efforts focus primarily on the front-side of the development process. They do not focus equal efforts on the backside of the effort - the on-going application of what is being learned. This study shows that what leaders do when they return to their jobs is the most meaningful to employees. It reinforces that critical organizational change efforts must be ongoing rather than dependent on quick fix programs. Significant development efforts should be devoted to supporting leaders to do the critical follow-up and feedback activities that support positive change.

### Coaching for Behavioral Change

Marshall describes how, as leaders, we often preach values that we sometimes do not live up to. The failure to uphold espoused values in general, and teamwork in particular, is one of the biggest frustrations in the workplace.

In a recent study of leadership effectiveness, employees rated their manager's ability to "effectively deal with individuals whose behavior undermines teamwork" last in 92 elements of effective leadership.

If everyone acknowledges this challenge, why is it so difficult for leaders to give this kind of feedback? One reason is that leaders, like most people, want to be liked. Leaders are often afraid that confronting people about their behavioral shortcomings will cause them to be disliked. However, research shows that people highly value honest feedback whether or not the feedback itself is positive.

Feedback on specific performance issues can produce profound results and positive change. This is the essence of behavioral coaching. Behavioral coaching is designed to help people achieve positive, measurable change in behavior as perceived by the key stakeholders.

- When behavioral coaching will not work

While the process of behavioral coaching can be a powerful tool to change behavior, it will not always be effective or appropriate. Ask yourself if any of the following conditions exist:

- Lack of sincere effort
- "Written off" by the organization
- Technical, functional or strategic issues
- Organization is going in the wrong direction
- Integrity issues

- When behavioral coaching will work

- The performance issue is behavioral
- The person is motivated to change
- She/he is given a fair chance

### Behavioral Coaching: Steps in the Process

In this portion of the program, Marshall will present an 8-step process for implementing a coaching program for an individual. He discusses guidelines and tips for ensuring success.

**Step 1: Identify the desired attributes for the person that you are coaching**

Identify the behavioral characteristics of a successful leader in that particular position. Secure agreement from the person to be coached that these are the important behaviors. This agreement will help in getting commitment from the person for the coaching process.

**Step 2: Determine who can provide meaningful feedback**

Key stakeholders can include peers, direct reports, customers, suppliers or members of the senior management team. Strive for a balanced mix - the person being coached must feel that these people will provide appropriate input.

**Step 3: Collect feedback**

Getting anonymous, written assessment information compiled by an outside source and given directly to the leader being coached is usually the best method for gathering and presenting this information.

**Step 4: Analyze the results**

Talk with the leader about her/his feedback results. Focus on discussing the leader's key strengths and areas for development.

**Step 5: Develop an action plan**

The most helpful and appreciated outcome of the assessment process is receiving specific ideas and strategies. Develop alternatives for the leader to consider rather than presenting mandates. Help the leader focus on one or two key behaviors to develop and a few actions steps to improve each. The difficult part is doing what was suggested.

**Step 6: Have the leader respond to key stakeholders**

The leader being assessed should talk with each of the key stakeholders who provided feedback. She/he should be encouraged to collect additional suggestions on how to improve in the key areas targeted for improvement.

**Step 7: Develop an ongoing follow-up and mini-survey process**

Within three or four months conduct a two-to-six item survey with the original assessment team. Ask whether the leader has become more or less effective in the areas targeted for improvement.

**Step 8: Review the results and start again**

If the leader has taken the process seriously, stakeholders almost invariably report improvement. Build on that success by repeating the process quarterly for the next 12 to 18 months. This type of follow-up assures continued progress and uncovers other areas for improvement.

Carrying out this process takes commitment and discipline. Simply by analyzing perceptions of others you will be able to change your relationship with that person. Leaders who want to improve, who talk to people about ways to improve, who solicit feedback, and who conduct rigorous follow-up almost always improve. As their self-confidence grows they keep getting better, becoming more credible and positive role models.

### Helping Successful People Change

There are a variety of reasons why successful people succeed. Some factors can be changed and some cannot. Every person does not have the potential to succeed in every activity. For example, a poor athlete may become better through practice. However, physical limitations may prohibit this person's chance of ever becoming a professional.

Marshall's review of research focused on the beliefs that tend to differentiate more successful people from their peers. Successful people tend to have four underlying beliefs:

- I choose to succeed.
- I can succeed.
- I will succeed.
- I have succeeded.

***I choose to succeed*** - Successful people believe that they are doing what they choose to do, because they choose to do it. They have a high need for self-determination.

***I can succeed*** - Successful people believe that they have the internal capacity to make desirable things happen. This is the definition of self-efficacy - perhaps the most central belief shown to drive individual success.

***I will succeed*** - An unflappable sense of optimism is one of the most important characteristics of successful people. They not only believe that they can achieve - the believe that they will achieve.

***I have succeeded*** - Successful people tend to have a positive interpretation of their past performance. High achievers not only believe that they have achieved results - they tend to believe that they were instrumental in helping the results get achieved.

Successful people's positive view of their performance can make it hard to hear constructive feedback from others. They often do not realize that they are successful "because of" some behaviors and "in spite of" others. One of the greatest mistakes of successful people is the assumption, "I am successful. I behave this way. Therefore, I must be successful because I behave this way!"

### How Successful People Change

- Have the successful person receive feedback on important, self-selected behaviors as perceived by important, self-selected raters. Since successful people have a high need for self-determination, the ownership of the behavioral change process has to come from them.

The first reason that people deny the validity of behavioral feedback is "wrong behaviors." The second reason is "wrong raters." The more involved they are in determining their profile - what the desired behavior is, and selecting their raters, the more likely they are to buy-in to the validity of demonstrating this behavior.

Marshall, along with Bev Kay and Ken Shelton, recently asked over 50 great thought leaders and teachers to describe a time when they learned something that make a key difference in their lives. This led to the book, *Learning Journeys*. More than half of the respondents described a situation in which they had received feedback or a challenge from someone that they deeply respected. Interestingly enough, most agreed that the same message would not have had much impact if a different person had delivered it. This made us realize that the source of feedback and suggestions can be as important as the content of the feedback and suggestions. If successful people respect the source of information, they will be much more likely to learn and change.

- Challenge the people you are coaching to work on only the behaviors that can make a real difference. Before beginning to work on changing behavior, check it out with people you respect - make sure the behavioral change is relevant to the achievement of your organization's goals and mission.
- Teach the successful person's colleagues to be helpful coaches - not cynics, critics or judges. Colleagues are much more likely to help if they feel that they are respected and that their advice is requested, as opposed to expected.
- Our before-and-after research has taught us a great lesson - successful people will not change behavior because they go to a course. They will get better because of their own efforts and the efforts of their respected colleagues. By understanding the unique issues involved in helping successful people change, organizations can get a huge return on investment from their leadership development efforts. There is generally a normal distribution curve for most types of achievement. The marginal gain for helping a highly successful person move from the "top 5%" to the "top 1%" may be greater to the organization than the gain from helping the average performer move from the "top 50%" to the "top 20%." This is especially true with high potential leaders who represent one of the greatest sources of value for the organization's future.



### Team Building Without Time Wasting

- Working in teams - project teams, cross-functional teams, virtual teams - continues to be a critical way of working. Leaders find themselves both members and leaders of all kinds of teams. Many of today's leaders are faced with the dilemma of having to build effective teams quickly.
- The research reviewed in this program shows how focused feedback and follow-up can increase leadership effectiveness. A similar approach to team building has been shown to help leaders build teamwork without wasting time.
- To successfully implement the following team building process, the leader will need to assume the role of coach or facilitator, fighting the urge to be the "boss" of the project. Greater improvement in teamwork will generally occur if the team members develop their own behavioral change strategy rather than having the leader develop and impose the strategy on the team.

### The Team Building Process

- *Assessing where we are vs. where we want to be.* Ask team members to record their confidential answers to two questions (on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being ideal):
  - How well are we doing in terms of working together as a team?
  - How well do we need to be doing in terms of working together as a team?
- *Choosing team-wide behaviors for change.* Work with the team to choose and prioritize behaviors that they believe the team needs to change to be more effective.
- *Choose individual behaviors to change.* Have each team member review her/his list of suggested individual behavioral changes and choose the two that seem most important. Have each member announce the behaviors they chose.
- *Follow-up.* Encourage each team member to get a progress report from every other team member. Ask team members to report on their effectiveness in demonstrating the key behaviors common to all team members as well as the two key personal behaviors. Make specific suggestions for improvement in areas where behavior does not match expectations.
- *Use the team mini-survey.* Conduct a survey follow-up process in three to four months. In this process, each team member will receive confidential feedback from every other team member regarding her/his perceived change in team effectiveness.

**Team Items:**

- |  |                  |
|--|------------------|
| 1. Clarifies roles and expectations with fellow team members                           | -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 |
| 2. Supports the final decision of the team (even if it was not his/her original ideas) | -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 |

**Individual Items:**

- |   |                  |
|---|------------------|
| 1. Genuinely listens to others                    | -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 |
| 2. Strives to see the value of differing opinions | -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 |

- *Discuss the result and re-start the process.* Summarize the results and review them with the team. Facilitate a discussion on how the team as a whole is doing in increasing its effectiveness. Encourage the team to keep focused on their efforts. Conduct a summary session with the team one year after the process starts. Again, ask the team members to rate their effectiveness on where we are vs. where we need to be. Compare these ratings with the original results. Recognize individual and team efforts and discuss next steps.

**Wrap-Up**

Marshall suggests that the first step to convincing others of your commitment to change is to sincerely believe in those commitments yourself. The power of engaging in active follow-up improves behavior and perceptions of leadership effectiveness.

The processes reviewed in this program work because they are highly focused, include feedback and follow-up, do not waste time, and cause leaders to focus on self-improvement. The processes also work because they provide ongoing feedback and reinforcement. Most processes provide participants with feedback every 12 months. Any research on behavioral change will show that feedback and reinforcement for new behavior needs to occur much more frequently.

### **Post-Presentation Activities**

- Complete and submit the participant evaluation form - found at: [http://www.linkageinc.com/training/satellites/satellite\\_evals.shtml](http://www.linkageinc.com/training/satellites/satellite_evals.shtml)
- Review the key points and your notes and insights to reinforce your learning.
- Read the article, "Helping Successful People Change: A Key Challenge in Leading for Innovation," which is included in Section 2 of your participant materials.
- Consider engaging in a 360° feedback process for yourself to identify your key strengths and critical areas for behavioral improvement.
- Consider behavioral coaching with one of your direct reports using Marshall's process.
- Use the team building process that Marshall presented with a team you are currently leading, or with a new team you will be leading.
- Consider taking the Essential Coach Assessment Instrument as a self-assessment or a 360° assessment (available from Linkage, Inc.).

**SECTION 2**

**Article**

**Helping Successful People Change: A Key Challenge in Leading for Innovation**

By Marshall Goldsmith

In my role as an executive coach, I am asked to work with extremely successful people who want to get even better. They are usually key executives in major corporations. They are almost always very intelligent, dedicated and persistent. They are committed to the success of their companies. They have high personal integrity. Many are financially independent. They are not working because they have to. They are working because they want to. Intellectually, they realize that the leadership behavior that was associated with yesterday's results may not be the behavior that is needed to achieve tomorrow's innovation.

Most of us see the need to change the behavior of others. This is one of our great challenges in leading for innovation. We wonder why it is so difficult for them to change. Yet, we often have difficulty in changing even small aspects of our own behavior! As we become more successful, it seems even harder to change. As Charles Handy has pointed out, the "paradox of success" occurs because we *need* to change before we *have* to change. However, "when things are going well we feel no reason to change."

I have recently completed a review of research related to the topic of helping successful people change their behavior. Most research on behavioral change has focused on dysfunctional behavior with clear physiological consequences (e.g. alcoholism, drug addiction, eating disorders or smoking). A substantial amount has been written on why successful people succeed. Not surprisingly, very little has been written on the unique challenges involved in helping successful people change. The entire concept is somewhat counter-intuitive.

My assumption is that you, the reader of this article, are a successful person. You may not be a key executive in a major corporation. However, I would guess that you are successful by most socio-economic standards. My second assumption is that you are managing successful people. I am going to assume that many of the people that you work with are knowledge workers. In most cases your most valued co-workers are also there because they want to be, not because they have to be. You frequently have the challenge of helping yourself and helping them make the changes that will take your team to the next level.

What have I learned about helping people like you and your colleagues change?

In almost all cases, even the most successful leaders can increase their effectiveness by changing certain elements of their behavior. (The same is true for us as spouses, partners, friends, parents and children.) By becoming aware of how we can improve, involving respected colleagues and following-up, we can almost always get better at the behavior we choose as perceived by the people we choose. I have also learned that the key beliefs that can help us succeed can become challenges when it is time to change.

### Four Key Beliefs of Successful People: Their Implications for Behavioral Change

There are a variety of reasons why successful people succeed. Some factors can be changed and some cannot. Every person does not have the potential to succeed in every activity. For example, a poor athlete may become better through practice. However, physical limitations may prohibit this person's chance of ever becoming a professional. As Howard Gardner pointed out, different individuals have different "intelligences" that can dramatically impact their potential in different fields.

My review of research focused on the beliefs that tend to differentiate more successful people from their peers (who may have similar potential to achieve). Successful people tend to have four underlying beliefs:

- 1) I choose to succeed.
- 2) I can succeed.
- 3) I will succeed.
- 4) I have succeeded.

Each of these beliefs can be labeled differently (self-determination, self-efficacy, optimism, etc.). Each belief increases the likelihood of achieving success. All of the beliefs are inter-related and positively correlated with each other. Each belief will be discussed in terms of why it generally leads to success and how it can inhibit change.

#### **I choose to succeed.**

***Successful people believe that they are doing what they choose to do, because they choose to do it.***

Successful people have a high need for self-determination. The more successful a person is, the more likely this is to be true. Successful people have a unique distaste for feeling controlled or manipulated. In my work, I have "made peace" with the fact that I cannot "make" executives change. I can only help them get better at what they choose to change. One of the great challenges of coaching (or teaching or parenting) is to realize that the ultimate motivation for change has to come from the person being coached, not the coach.

Having the belief, "I choose to succeed" does not imply that successful people are selfish. Obviously, many successful people are great team players. It does mean that successful people need to feel a personal commitment to what they are doing. They need a sense of ownership. When leaders have a personal commitment to the mission, they will be much more likely to achieve results. They will lead with

their hearts as well as their minds. They will also be effective in attracting and developing fellow "believers" who want to get the job done.

"I choose to succeed" is a belief that is highly correlated with achievement. Adding "and I choose to change" can be a very difficult transition.

***Successful people's personal commitment can make it hard for them to change.***

The more we believe that our behavior is a result of our own choices and commitments, the less likely we are to want to change our behavior.

One of the best-researched principles in psychology is called cognitive dissonance. The underlying theory is simple. The more we are committed to believing that something is true, the less likely we are to be willing to change our beliefs (even in the face of clear evidence that shows we are wrong). Cognitive dissonance works in favor of successful people in most situations. Their commitment encourages them to "stay the course" and to not give up when the going gets tough. This same principle can work against successful people when they should change course.

A macro-level example of this phenomenon has occurred in Japan. In the 1980s, Japanese managers were widely praised as role models for leadership behavior. The country's economic growth was one of the greatest success stories in the history of business. Books were written and benchmarking trips were organized so that leaders from around the world could learn from their success. This success had a deep impact on many leaders. Business success went beyond financial results and was transformed into national pride about "Japanese management". Leaders were not just proud of what they had achieved, they were proud of how they achieved it.

Unfortunately, the style that worked in the 1980s did not work in the 1990s. Rapid changes in technology, the economy, the role of manufacturing and the workforce made the "Japanese management" approach far less desirable. It has taken a decade for many leaders in Japan to admit that their previous approach was no longer working. Many leaders "denied the numbers" for years, before accepting the fact that change was needed. The same commitment that had brought a huge success in the 1980s, led to a huge challenge by the turn of the century. The leaders who have had the wisdom and courage to let go of the past are the ones who are succeeding in the new Japanese economy.

**I can succeed.**

***Successful people believe that they have the internal capacity to make desirable things happen.***

This is the definition of self-efficacy. It is perhaps the most central belief shown to drive individual success. People who believe they can succeed see opportunities where others see threats. This comfort with ambiguity leads people with high

self-efficacy to take greater risks and achieve greater returns. To put it simply, they try more different things!

Successful people tend to have a high "internal locus of control". In other words they do not feel like victims of fate. They believe that they have the motivation and ability to change their world. They see success for themselves and others as largely a function of this motivation and ability, not luck, random chance or external factors.

There is a very positive (and not surprising) relationship between "need for self-determination" and "internal locus of control". If people believe that the world is largely out of their control and that they are merely cogs in the wheel of life, they will not feel as bad about being controlled or manipulated. (After all, that's just the way it is.) If people feel that they can change their world and make it better, they will find external control and manipulation much more distasteful.

While, the "I can succeed" belief is generally associated with success, it can (when combined with optimism) lead to what is called "superstitious behavior". This "superstition" can lead to difficulty in changing behavior even when others see this behavior as obviously dysfunctional.

***Successful people often confuse correlation with causation. They often do not realize that they are successful "because of" some behaviors and "in spite of" others.***

Any human (in fact, any animal) will tend to repeat behavior that is followed by positive reinforcement. The more successful people are (by definition), the more positive reinforcement they tend to receive. One of the greatest mistakes of successful people is the assumption, "I am successful. I behave this way. Therefore, I must be successful *because* I behave this way!"

"Superstitious behavior" is merely the confusion of correlation and causation. Many leaders get positive reinforcement for the *results* that occur. They then assume that their behavior is what helped lead to these results. Just as successful athletes believe in "lucky" numbers or perform "rituals" before a contest, successful business leaders tend to repeat behaviors that are followed by rewards. They may fear that changing *any* behavior will break their "string of success".

One financial services CEO was viewed as an outstanding leader, but was seen as incredibly weak in the area of providing feedback to his direct reports. (This is fairly common for top executives.) He had developed an elaborate rationalization as to: 1) why feedback "at my level" was not important, 2) why feedback was a waste of his time, 3) how he had "made it this far" without providing feedback, and 4) how he had never received feedback and it obviously did not hurt *his* career!

Fortunately, this executive had some highly respected direct reports who were both courageous and assertive. He decided to honor their wishes and "give feedback a try". After achieving very positive success, he finally admitted that



this had been a personal weakness for years. He realized he had been successful in spite of his lack of providing feedback, not because of it.

**I will succeed.**

***An unflappable sense of optimism is one of the most important characteristics of successful people.***

Successful people not only believe that they *can* achieve, they believe that they *will* achieve. This belief goes beyond any one task. Successful leaders tend to communicate with an overall sense of self-confidence. In a recent study with Accenture (formerly Andersen Consulting) involving over 200 high-potential leaders (from 120 companies around the world), self-confidence ranked as one of the "top 10" elements of effective leadership for leaders in the past, the present and the future.

Successful leaders not only believe that they will achieve, they assume that the people they respect will achieve. As was stated earlier, they see success as a function of people's motivation and ability. If they believe that their people have the motivation and ability, they communicate this contagious sense of optimism and self-confidence to others.

Successful people tend to pursue opportunities. If they set a goal, write the goal down and publicly announce the goal, they will tend to do "whatever it takes" to achieve the goal.

While this sense of optimism is generally associated with success, it can easily lead to overload if it is not controlled.

***Successful people tend to be extremely busy and face the danger of over-commitment.***

It can be difficult for an ambitious person, with an "I will succeed attitude, to say "no" to desirable opportunities. As of this writing, the huge majority of executives that I work with feel as busy (or busier) today than they have ever felt in their lives. In North America, this perception was consistent for the last four years of the '90s, a decade which featured one of the longest economic expansions in our history. Most of these executives were not over-committed because they were trying to "save a sinking ship". They were over-committed because they were "drowning in a sea of opportunity".

Successful people achieve a lot, and they often believe that they can do more than they can. My favorite European "volunteer" client was the Executive Director of one of the world's leading human services organizations. His mission was to help the world's most vulnerable people. Unfortunately (for all of us), his business was booming. His biggest challenge as a leader, by far, was avoiding over-commitment. (By the way, this is very common for the top human services leaders.) Without externally imposed discipline, he had a tendency to promise

even more than the most dedicated staff could deliver. Unchecked, this "we will succeed" attitude could lead to staff burn out, high turnover and ultimately less capability to help those in need.

One of my clients recently completed a study of the graduates of their executive development program. As part of the program each graduate was expected to focus on behavioral change. They were all instructed in a simple process to help them achieve this change. At the end of the class over 95% of the participants said that they would follow the steps in the process (in a confidential survey). One year later about 70% (more or less) followed the process. This group showed huge improvement in effectively changing behavior. Approximately 30% did nothing. This group showed no more improvement than a control group.

When asked, "Why didn't you implement the behavioral change plan that you said you would?" "I was over-committed and just did not get to it!" was by far the most common response.

**I have succeeded.**

***Successful people tend to have a positive interpretation of their past performance.***

High achievers not only believe that they have achieved results, they tend to believe that they were instrumental in helping the results get achieved. This tends to be true even if the positive outcomes were caused by external events that they did not control.

In a positive way, successful people are "delusional". They tend to see their previous history as a validation of who they are and what they have done. This positive interpretation of the past leads to increased optimism towards the future and increases the likelihood of future success.

While the belief, "I have been successful" has many positive benefits, it can cause difficulty when it is time to change behavior.

***Successful people's positive view of their performance can make it hard to hear negative feedback from others.***

Successful people consistently over-rate their performance relative to their professional peers. I have personally asked over ten thousand successful professionals to "rate yourself" relative to your professional peers. Eighty to 85% of *all* successful professionals rated themselves in the "top 20%" of their peer group (who were, by the way the exercise was defined, statistically as successful as they were). Professions with higher perceived social status (e.g. physicians, pilots, investment bankers) tend to have even higher self-assessments relative to their (equally prestigious) peers.

My favorite example of this characteristic occurred with a group of medical doctors. I told the group that I had done extensive research, which had proven

that exactly half of all MDs had graduated in the bottom half of their medical school class. Two of the doctors insisted that this was impossible!

In trying to help successful people change behavior, it is important to help them separate the "message" from the "messenger".

Successful people tend to deny the importance of negative behavioral feedback for three common reasons: 1) the feedback is being delivered by someone that they do not see as an equal in terms of success therefore it "doesn't count"; 2) they assume that feedback which is inconsistent with their self-image is incorrect and the other person is "confused" or 3) they agree with the feedback, but assume that the behavior must not be that important since they are successful.

### **Helping Successful People Change**

In our work with leaders, my firm focuses on helping successful people achieve a positive, measurable, long-term change in behavior. To measure impact, we have completed before-and-after studies with tens of thousands of participants. The steps in the behavioral change process have been developed to work with successful executives. However, these steps can be used to help any successful person change their interpersonal behavior.

***Have the successful person receive feedback on important, self-selected behaviors as perceived by important, self-selected raters.***

It is hard to measure effectiveness in changing behavior unless there is a clear agreement on what desired behavior is. Successful people have a high need for self-determination. Ultimately, the ownership of the behavioral change process will have to come from the people who are changing their behavior, not from an internal or external coach.

One reason that successful people tend to deny the validity of behavioral feedback is that they were not involved in determining the desired behavior for a person in their position. The more they are involved in determining what this desired behavior is, the more likely they are to buy in to the validity of demonstrating this behavior. Successful people are very responsive to help in achieving goals that they have set. They tend to resist changes that make them feel judged or manipulated.

Successful people also have a desire for internal consistency. If leaders publicly state that certain behavior is important, they will be more likely to strive to be a positive role model in demonstrating this behavior.

From my experience in developing leadership profiles, I have found that almost all executives will develop a great profile of their desired behaviors. In most cases, *understanding* what behaviors are desired will not be their major challenge. Their major challenge will be *demonstrating* these behaviors.

An example of the value of involving leaders in developing their own profile occurred with a CEO client several years ago. When he received feedback from his co-workers (on his own behavior), he looked skeptically at one of the lower scoring items and asked, "Who was the person that wanted to include *that* item?" I replied, "You!" He then remembered why he wanted to include the item. He also began to face the fact that the real problem was his own behavior, not the wording of an item.

The first reason that people deny the validity of behavioral feedback is "wrong behaviors". The second reason is "wrong raters". If successful people select the raters, they will be much more likely to accept the validity of the feedback. Most executives respect the opinion of *almost all* of their key colleagues. By letting the successful person pick the raters, you can avoid the potential reaction, "Why should a winner like me listen to a loser like him?"

One argument against letting the people we coach pick their own raters is that they will pick their "friends" and the feedback will not be representative. I have not found this to be true for two reasons: 1) Almost all of the executives I have met end up selecting raters that are similar to the group I would select anyway. The only time they do not want to include someone is if the person is about to leave the company or they have a deep disrespect for this person. In my experience, I have never had an executive want to exclude more than two raters. 2) When 360° feedback is used for *developmental* purposes, the "items for improvement" that emerge from self-selected raters are quite similar to the items that come from other-selected raters.

Bev Kaye, Ken Shelton and I recently asked over 50 great thought leaders and teachers to describe a time when they learned something that made a key difference in their lives. This led to our book *Learning Journeys*. More than half of the respondents described a situation in which they had received feedback or a challenge from someone that they deeply respected. Interestingly enough most agreed that the same message would not have had much impact if a different person had delivered it. This made us realize that the source of feedback and suggestions can be as important as the content of the feedback and suggestions. If successful people respect the source of information, they will be much more likely to learn and change.

Successful people will almost always respond constructively to feedback when they are involved in selecting the behaviors and selecting the raters. By making the feedback confidential (not identifying raters), people will tend to focus on what they need to improve, not who did the rating. It is hard to deny the validity of items that we say are important as evaluated by raters that we respect!

***After receiving feedback, have the person select 1-2 important areas for behavioral improvement.***

I used to suggest that executives pick 1-3 areas for behavioral change. After doing before-and-after interviews (one year after receiving feedback), most executives

have let me know that three is too many. Many of the successful people that I meet are too busy now. As was mentioned earlier, a main reason that people do not stick with their change plan is over-commitment. They don't need another laundry list of goals. I now suggest that two should be the *maximum* number of behaviors to change. Changing *one* high-leverage behavior (that makes the most impact) can create a very positive difference.

Challenge the people you are coaching to work on *only* the behaviors that can make a real difference. I was asked to review the 360° feedback of one of the world's most successful "new economy" CEOs. After receiving his confidential feedback, he considered his lowest item (listening) and asked himself, "If I become a better listener, will this make our company a better company? I am busy. Is working to become a better listener the most effective use of my time?" Before he began to work on changing behavior, he checked it out with the Board and with people he respected. He then decided that this change was indeed worth his effort. I was greatly impressed with his thoughtfulness and maturity in dealing with his feedback. He had a clear mission and did not want to be distracted by dealing with behavioral change that was not relevant to the achievement of the mission.

If successful people see the connection between their behavioral change goals and their personal goals, they will be much more likely to change. They need to understand the difference between "because of" and "in spite of" behaviors. Some interesting research indicates that *the desire to achieve the skills associated with success is more highly correlated with achievement than the desire for success itself*. If the successful people that you are coaching see the connection between changing behavior, achieving their vision and living their values, they will be much more committed to "do what it takes" to achieve lasting change.

***Have the person involve respected colleagues in the behavioral change process.***

Ongoing involvement from supportive colleagues is almost always associated with positive behavioral change. Colleagues are much more likely to help if they feel that they are respected and that their advice is requested (as opposed to expected).

In involving key colleagues, we teach successful leaders to have brief conversations with each colleague during which they:

- 1) Thank each colleague for his/her feedback and express gratitude for the positive recognition that was received.
- 2) Let each colleague know the 1-2 areas for improvement that have been selected and why they are important.
- 3) Ask each colleague to help them by providing constructive, future-oriented suggestions that may help the leader achieve positive, measurable change.

4) Recruit the respected colleague to provide ongoing coaching to help them improve.

Findings on the usefulness of this process are very clear. When successful people write down goals, announce these goals to respected colleagues and involve the colleagues in helping them improve, positive measurable change is much more likely to occur.

***Teach the successful person's colleagues to be helpful coaches, not cynics, critics or judges.***

Unlike some forms of achievement (e.g. academic achievement), behavioral change is dependent on an interpersonal *relationship* that involves more than one person. If successful people feel that they are being encouraged and supported by the people around them, they will be much more likely to "stick with it" and achieve positive, long-term behavioral change. If they feel they are being judged or manipulated, they will tend to become hostile to the process and quit trying.

Years ago, I had an experience of this "turn off" effect with the CFO of a major computer company. His leadership feedback indicated that he was perceived as being "aloof" and "arrogant." He saw himself as introverted and somewhat shy. (It is not uncommon that introverted high-level executives are perceived as arrogant.) One suggestion from employees was that he "get off the top floor" and spend more time with the finance staff. On his first visit to practice "management by walking around", he was greeted with sarcastic comments like, "What's the matter, is the air conditioning broken up there?" and "What are you doing down here, slumming it?" He found the experience negative and embarrassing. I later discussed this with one of his employees. While the employee thought this was "funny," he did not realize that he was sabotaging his manager's efforts to meet his own request for behavioral change.

In our coaching process, we work not only with the executive; we work with the people around the executive. We do not get paid unless positive, measurable change occurs (after at least one year). The executive does not define whether he or she achieved positive, measurable change; the people around the executive determine it. We help these co-workers help the executive by doing the following:

- **"Letting go" of the past and focusing on the future.**

Successful people are much more likely to change by envisioning a positive future than by reliving a humiliating past. Proving that a successful person was "wrong" is often a counter-productive waste of time. Successful people respond well to getting ideas and suggestions for the future that are aimed at helping them achieve their goals. The analogy used by racecar drivers is, "Focus on the *road*, not on the *wall*!" The executive should not be expected to do everything that their colleagues suggest. Leadership is not a popularity contest. However, well-intended and constructive suggestions for the future are almost always useful.

- **Being a supportive coach, not a cynic, critic or judge.**

Successful people attribute more validity to the sincere recognition of success than to the sincere acknowledgement of failure. Behavioral change is almost always non-linear. Almost all adults will have set backs when attempting to change behavior. Co-workers need to realize that this is a natural part of the process and not give up on the executive. We all have a tendency to revert back to behaviors that were correlated with success in the past. The more successful we are, the easier it is to rationalize this return to past behavior. If the executive is encouraged to move beyond set backs and the colleagues do not dwell on these set backs, the odds for long-term change greatly improve. The colleague's goal should be to help the executive feel like a "winner" as they participate in the process of change.

***Develop a follow-up process that provides an opportunity for ongoing dialogue on selected behaviors with selected colleagues.***

Our research on feedback and follow-up has clearly shown that leaders are much more likely to achieve a positive, measurable change in behavior if they consistently involve selected colleagues (through follow-up dialogues) in the change process. These follow-up dialogues are very focused and need take only a few minutes. They can be done by phone or in-person. In one study (involving 8,000 respondents in a Fortune 100 corporation), only 18% of all leaders who received feedback, but did no follow-up, were rated as a "+2 or +3" on increased effectiveness in one year (on a "-3 to +3" scale). This was no better than a control group who had received no training and no feedback. On the other hand, 86% of leaders who did consistent (or periodic) follow-up received top ratings on increased effectiveness.

When co-workers are trained to be supportive coaches, the follow-up process provides an ongoing opportunity for constructive suggestions and recognition. It reinforces the individual's public commitment to change. Ongoing dialogue creates a process in which *both* parties are focused on improving the relationship, not on judging each other.

Mini-surveys can be a simple and efficient way to measure behavioral change. Mini-surveys are usually very short and focus only on the behaviors that have been selected by the person being coached. They are designed so that the raters evaluate behavior that occurs only during the coaching period. They focus on the rater's perception of *improvement*. If the executive agrees upon the desired behaviors for change, selects highly respected co-workers as raters, takes the process seriously and follows-up, positive change will almost always occur. After receiving the mini-survey results the executive thanks the raters, involves them in future change and continues the process. This is almost always a positive experience for the executive and for the co-workers.

In summary, helping successful people change behavior is both an opportunity and a challenge. Our before-and-after research has taught us a great lesson - successful people will not change behavior because they go to a course. They will get better because of their own efforts and the efforts of their respected colleagues. By understanding the unique issues involved in

helping successful people change, organizations can get a huge return on investment from their development efforts. There is generally a "normal distribution" curve for most types of achievement. The marginal gain for helping a highly successful person move from the "top 5%" to the "top 1%" may be greater (to the organization) than the gain from helping the average performer move from the "top 50%" to the "top 20%." This is especially true with high-potential leaders who represent one of the greatest sources of value for the organization of the future. While much more research needs to be done on this topic, there is a clear body of knowledge that can help make the best performers even better!



**SECTION 3**

**Forms**

**Question Sheet**

Use this form to write your question for Marshall Goldsmith or for discussion among your colleagues. Please write clearly.

**Name (optional)**

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**Organization**

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**Location**

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**Your question (25 words or fewer):**

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**Tel**     1-800-489-8814 (from within U.S.)  
            801-303-7412 (from outside U.S.)

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